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W.M. of Philadelphia to "Mr. Meredith" (October 1962)

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No return address

Mr. Meredith

The statement you made to the
press is just like this paper I'm
writing on very cheap. I am
glad that this news paper article
expresses the sentiments of a lot of
people up this way. Don't let
the Negro people lose faith
in you. Please keep your mouth
shut & try to stay in school.
From the statements you make
education is what you need.
plenty of
W.M. of Philadelphia

An Unwarranted Attack

The basic principle behind Federal intervention in James E. Meredith's enrollment in the University of Mississippi is the obligation to uphold the law of the land against those who would defy it.

That principle and that obligation are not altered by Meredith's singularly ungracious conduct in criticizing the Army which came to his rescue in the rioting last week, and which has kept him alive and unhurt.

But this individual's behavior does not help the cause of racial harmony and may make more difficult the path of other young Negroes who make their claim, in turn, to their rights to higher education in the South.

Meredith has never yet uttered one word of appreciation for the services rendered by the soldiers who pacified the town of Oxford and the university campus after the rioters had killed two persons and wounded many others.

Instead he has seen fit to make his first public statement an attack on the Army for "segregating" the troops assigned to his protection and thereby "dishonoring and disgracing" the many thousands of Negroes who are in the military service.

He has apparently devoted himself on his way to and from classes on the arms of U. S. marshals to counting Negro soldiers among the troops. The ones he saw, he complains, were on a garbage detail.

The Army's answer to his complaint is that Negro troopers were kept to a minimum for their own safety and have since been returned to normal functions.

There was no "dishonor" or "disgrace" involved in the very difficult Army operation in Oxford, but the beneficiary of the operation—which has cost the taxpayers huge sums—has dishonored himself by his unwarranted accusations.

In another direction, he has hit at the Negro organization which has assisted him in his court struggle to win enrollment, the NAACP, in an effort to make it clear to future historians that he deserves the sole credit for challenging the hitherto ironbound segregation bars at the University of Mississippi.

Meredith has doubtless been under severe strain during his ordeal on and off the campus and he has received well-deserved credit for his courage and dignity in withstanding insult and threats of bodily harm.

It is unfortunate that he should spoil this image by striking out at those who have helped him in his days of trial. With a little second-thinking about the incident, he might regret his impulsive remarks.

Whether he does or not, the fundamentals in the Meredith case are unchanged. The rights of all our citizens will continue to be upheld, and the law preserved, regardless of race, creed or color.